

INVASION



OF THE

WEIRD TREES

VOLUME 2:

THE FREAKS RETURN

TREES....

....they come in all shapes and sizes. They fill the air with sweet, fragrant scents of spring blossoms, and splash the landscape with brilliant colors in the fall. They cool the air with their shade and provide a barrier against the harsh winter wind. They add beauty and comfort to our lives, as well as furnishing us with thousands of products we use every day.

But this booklet isn't about the beautiful trees, and it doesn't focus on the bounties of Mother Nature. It doesn't ask you to "thank a tree" for the oxygen you breathe, or "hug a tree" in an affectionate display of gratitude. Some of the creatures featured in this publication might evoke more fear than affection. In fact, the thought of hugging some of these freaks of nature might be downright repulsive.

Have you ever been driving down a road or walking in a woods when you've happened upon a tree that is just so unusual that you are compelled to stop and stare? Have you ever said to yourself, "I wish I had my camera to capture this on film."?

During the spring of 2000 and again in 2002, many Hoosiers took to the outdoors to do just that--to capture on film what words alone could not describe. After receiving hundreds of entries, our District Foresters employed a critical eye, years of arboreal experience, and sometimes a slightly twisted sense of reality to select the "weirdest" tree for each county. The results of their selections are highlighted in this booklet. If no entry was received for a given county in 2002, the entry selected as the weirdest in the 2000 Search is shown.

If your county is not represented, or if you know of a tree that is more weird than the one shown for your county, get your camera tuned up and your hiking boots ready. The deadline to enter the next Weird Tree Search will be April 15, 2004.

And now, witness the Invasion (if you dare to proceed).....



Double vision
plagues home-
owner

Adams county, submitted by
Ruth Brown



Indecision has
tree growing
many directions

Allen county, submitted by
John B. Mahoney

No left turn!



Brown county, submitted by
Larry Wallace



Bartholomew county, submitted by
Mauri & Debra Young

Long arm of law
works undercover





Foresters try to get
handle on tree

Clark county, submitted by
Forest J. Hall

Who you callin'
LUMPY?



Clay county, submitted by Cecil E. Raab



Road erupts
with tree

Crawford county, submitted by
Paul Harmon



*Daviess county, submitted by Jennifer Davis

Forest hijinx seen through
secret keyhole



Reach out and
touch someone

Tree forms bridge
over troubled waters

Dekalb county, submitted by
Sirleine M. Smith



Delaware county, submitted by Anson Tooley



Dubois county, submitted by
Dwight E. Seal

Tree caught doing
donuts in woods

Just a little off
the top, please



Elkhart county, submitted by
Sue A. Powell



Tree tells
fish story

Fayette county, submitted by Donald Hollcroft

Unsightly warts
blamed on
tree toad



Floyd county, submitted by
Natalie Pomeroy



Arboreal
amour!

Fountain county, submitted by Don Bickel

“Ugly duckling”
aspires to be
Christmas tree



Fulton county, submitted by Laura Snipes



X-ray reveals watermelon
swallowed by tree

* Grant county, submitted by Lisa Dice



* Hamilton county, submitted by
Becky Mansmann

Confused tree
thinks it's a
"P" plant



Greene county, submitted by
Rick Morron

"Tree-in-a-can"
latest craze



Hancock county, submitted by Kay I. Wall

Carmen Miranda
returns as tree



Harrison county, submitted by Paul Harmon

Forest giant caught
tip-toeing through woods

Expectant
sycamore
due any day



Hendricks county, submitted by Carly Purvis

Tree succumbs to
middle-aged spread



Henry county, submitted by Barbara Shoemaker

Old neighborhood
terrorized by
alien life form



Howard county, submitted by Chris Dimitt



Huntington county, submitted by
Myron Ridgeway

A lean year
for this one

Crook in
woods exposed



Jefferson county, submitted by Ken Knauf

Mortar shell
survivor plots
counter-attack

Searchers misled:
needle found in
woods, not
haystack



Jackson county, submitted by
Candy Trueblood



Jennings county, submitted by
Joe Spurlock



Unsuspecting
motorist falls
for trap

Johnson county, submitted by Linda Cummins



Genie in tree
awaits rub

Lagrange county, submitted by
Renee Harville

Child possesses
mysterious
tree-bending
powers

Laporte county, submitted by Richard Magiera



Kosciusko county, submitted by
Max Beer





Tree professes its honesty;
Pinocchio is skeptical

Lawrence county, submitted by
H.C. Cummings

Tree web
catches
building



Madison county, submitted by Jerry & Beth Cravens



* Marshall county, submitted by Harvey Firari

Tree finds
weening
offspring
difficult



Marion county, submitted by
Bill Howard

Tree anointed by
shaggy dog
undergoes
transformation



Eye in the sky
watches over forest

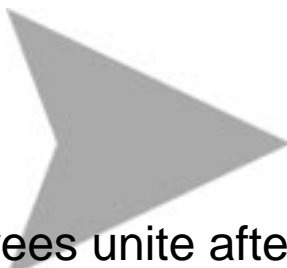
Leaner year
predicted
for tree



Martin county, submitted by John Johnson



iami county, submitted by Linda Lorenz



Trees unite after
long separation

Monroe county, submitted by
Mary Lou Carter

Tree reveals its
inner self



* Montgomery county, submitted by
Wes Crawford



Old sycamore
hangs out with
younger crowd

Morgan county, submitted by
Stephen Saucerman

Confused
tree sprouts
elephant trunk



Newton county, submitted by
Duane Datzman



Termite-infested
tree going buggy

Noble county, submitted by
Rose Blumer

Forest
candleabra
baffles experts



Orange county, submitted by Doug Merkel



Tree diagnosed
with dual identity

Owen county, submitted by Stan Sims

Another forest
resident with split
personality



Parke county, submitted by
Paul Ray



Perry county, submitted by
Ronald Lautner

Jimmy Durante
makes posthumous
comeback

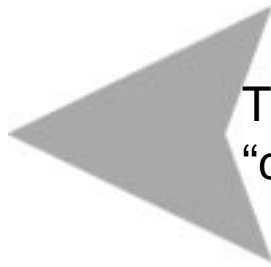


Pike county, submitted by Lu Froehle

More than corn
grown in Indiana



Porter county, submitted by
David Oberst



Tree aspires to be
“chip off old block”



Wayward tree
has parent
concerned



Posey county, submitted by
Jack Finck



* Pulaski county, submitted by Steve Knebel

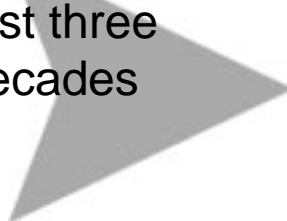
Enlarged heart
puts tree at risk



Narcoleptic tree
snoozes through
first three
decades



Ripley county, submitted by Don Tolbert



Buried pitchfork
sprouts, grows to
maturity



Scott county, submitted by Wendell Miller

Mineral
supplements
keep tree
healthy



* Starke county, submitted by
James Shilling

First case of
forest mumps
discovered



Spencer county, submitted by
Carol Van Winkle and Wavy Mitchell

Foresters study
poor posture
in trees



Steuben county, submitted by Paul Beckwith



St. Joseph county, submitted by
Larry D. Enders

All-points
bulletin issued
for sign their



Sullivan county, submitted by
Bruce Finkbiner

Petrified python
discovered on
Hoosier tree



Tippecanoe county, submitted by
Robert L. Stasburger

Treetop angel
awaits
Chirstmas

Walk-through
metal detector
installed for
forest security



Vanderburgh county, submitted by Victor L. Chamness

New highway
median design
being tested



Vigo county, submitted by Dean Reinoehl

Tree found with antennae;
neighbors report great
reception



Wabash county, submitted by
Danielle Jean Knable



Warrick county, submitted by Linda Houchin

Tree caught
fishing without
license; limb
may be
confiscated

Bent on
success



Washington county, submitted by Marion Garriott



tree's green
seeks sunny side
of street

* Wayne county, submitted
by Philip Coffman



Wells county, submitted by Isaiah & Aaron Douglass

Gang of crooks
seen lurking
in woods



Whitley county, submitted by
Richard Zernack



White county, submitted by Eleanor L. Hickman

They're Weird—But How Did They Get That Way?



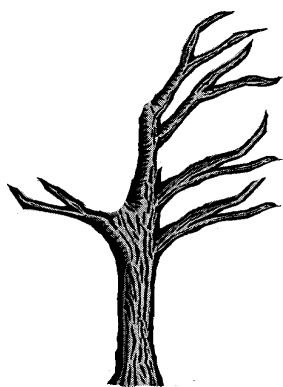
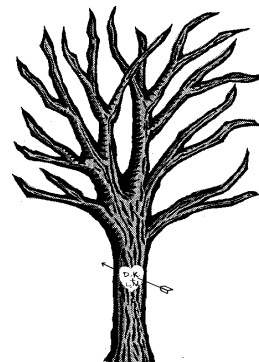
Science is founded upon explaining the unknown and making sense of the weird. But some freaks of nature even defy scientific explanation. The collection of weird trees displayed in this booklet provide a challenging exercise for modern investigators.

A team of highly trained and experienced DNR scientists agreed to examine these specimens and, if possible, determine the causes of their weirdness. Here are their findings:

SYMPTOM: Embedded object

DIAGNOSIS: A common notion about trees is that an object fixed to the tree will get higher as the tree grows. That is not correct. Trees grow from the tips of the branches, and once something is attached to the tree, it will not get higher over time. It will, however, be eaten. Trees grow not only in height, but also in girth. As the tree grows in diameter, it also will “eat” or grow around any object fixed to the tree or even next to it. Hence, a nail placed into a tree when it is only a sapling will be “consumed” and be deep inside the trunk when that tree reaches maturity. Trees will eat nails, wires, cables, signs, and fenceposts. Trees will even sprout and grow up through abandoned fence, machinery, or almost anything else. As the trees grow, they will slowly grow around any foreign object. Often, these deeply embedded objects cannot be detected when the tree is mature. Because these hidden objects can be very dangerous if they come into contact with a saw, it is not recommended to nail or fasten anything to a tree — The tree will eat it! Trees pictured in this booklet have embedded a sign and a fence post. The sign was obviously nailed to the tree, but the fencepost was placed too close to the tree’s trunk. These embedded objects cannot be safely removed. Over time, the trees will continue to “consume” the objects until the trees have completely embedded them inside the tree’s trunks.

—Jayson Waterman, District Forester



SYMPTOM: Unusual branching

DIAGNOSIS: Unusual or abnormal branching is normally the result of some type or injury. If the top of a tree is damaged, the side branches closest to the point of damage will turn up towards the sky and establish dominance. In other instances, a lower branch may become damaged or distorted. If it continues to receive enough sunlight to maintain growth, it will continue to grow in its distorted condition. Early Indian tribes have been known to bend the branches of trees to permanently mark the location of trails.

Insects such as mites, fungi and dwarf mistletoe can all cause the over stimulation of dormant buds which results in the formation of dense mats of branches commonly called witches’ broom. And lastly, sometimes the genetics of a tree just go a little haywire and you get branching that is unusual. Many common ornamental varieties that are prized for their unusual appearance are the result of natural genetic mutation.

—Chuck Ratts, District Forester

SYMPTOM: Multiple stems

DIAGNOSIS: Some multi-stemmed trees can be explained as a result of phototropism. Plants are attracted to light. When a tree is knocked or blown over, the side branches feel the need for light and grow toward it. It has been said Indians used to do this on purpose to identify hunting spots, or to give them directions through a woods.

Other trees with multiple stems are a result of stump sprouts. When a tree is harvested, buds beneath the bark sprout as a survival tactic. Their chance of becoming new trees is dependent on the size of the original tree and their location on the stump. Those closest to the ground have a better chance. Most hardwood trees will produce sprouts. Usually they will total 2, 3 or 4 stems. Some very weird trees may have more sprouts that originate higher on the stump. My wife and I have 3 Stump sprouts named Michael, Steven, and Eric. Also a secondary sprout, Alexandra was recently born to Steven and his wife Erin.

—Don Stump, District Forester

**SYMPTOM: Warts, Bumps and Burls**

DIAGNOSIS: Teenagers and witches take heart. Mother Nature has cursed some things beside you with ugly bumps and warts. Trees have bumps, warts, and burls. The teenager fears the facial bumps before a date, the witch looks much more evil with warts on her nose and chin, and nothing disfigures a tree quite like an unexplained burl. The teenager grows past his problem, the witch is only imagined, but the tree remains ugly forever. Best of all we learn to love and appreciate things because of their differences from the norm.



Whenever people see a tree with unique bumps and burls the question is, “Boy, what caused that?” I continue to ask the same question and receive answers from, “I don’t know.” to “We think maybe....” Insects, damage to the bark,

viruses, and mutated growth buds have all been suspected. Maybe we should just accept this unique gift and not ask why.

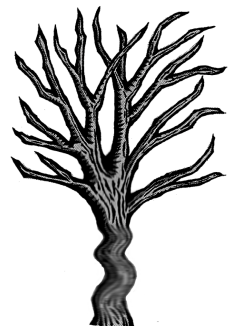
We do know that inside these ugly, abnormal growths is some of the most interesting grain patterns found in any wood. These distinct woods are highly prized for tables, clocks, bowls, and other decorative products. Few of us can look at these beautiful things made possible by ugly without wondering why. I think I want it to remain a mystery. That way I can enjoy creating my own explanation for each one I find and realize the value of diversity.

—Rex Gambill, District Forester

SYMPTOM: Crooked or misdirected trunk

DIAGNOSIS: All plants grow upward, reaching for the sun! These examples of unusually growing trees provide a lesson in how persistent plants are in sticking to this rule. Each of these trees has experienced some physical damage. Perhaps a windstorm blew down another tree and it landed across this tree when it was much smaller. As side branches on that bent stem reached for light, they took over growth dominance. Many years later, these side branches now appear as the dominant stem(s) of the tree. Early Americans used this characteristic of trees to mark trails. A sapling bent over and tied down can be pointed in the direction of a trail. This growing trail marker will last for many years with no maintenance.

—Steve Marling, District Forester



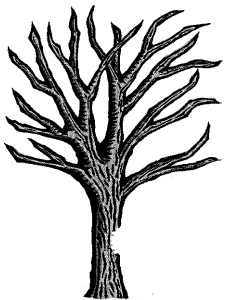


SYMPTOM: Trees connected together

DIAGNOSIS: What appear to be natural grafts between two trees or between two branches of the same tree are not that uncommon. Anyone who spends a lot of time in the woods has seen this phenomenon. How does it happen? Apparently as the trees grow in diameter extreme pressure builds at the point where a projecting limb contacts another tree or another part of the same tree. If both members are parts of the same tree then both are genetically identical and a true graft may occur. If there are two trees of the same species then the genetic similarity may allow a true graft. The artificial grafting of fruit trees and ornamentals is a routine procedure involving tissue from trees of the same species.

Where different species are involved a true graft would be far more difficult because of genetic incompatibility. What appears to be a true graft may be deceiving and there would be no way to know for sure without damaging the point of contact.

—Mike Coggeshall, District Forester



SYMPTOM: Indentations

DIAGNOSIS: Some indentations are caused by a canker, or fungus, which forms what appear to be “eyes” in the bark. The nectria canker can actually wrap completely around the tree and kill it, but usually only slows the growth of the tree. This fungus can be spread but is not commonly found in trees older than 20 years of age.

You may recall one tree with a person and dog inside it. Forest gnomes may exist according to this picture. This gargantuan tree, a sycamore, has hollowed out to form a large cavity within. Most likely, this tree has been periodically flooded a number of times and lies in low ground where water saturates the soil. This wetness can often cause decay from the inside out. An old injury from logs floating by in a flood or logging damage can also cause the tree to decay. Sometimes, coon hunters will “smoke out” a raccoon hiding within and the fire will burn out the center of the already hollow tree. Not a place I would want to be sheltered during a storm because the tree is probably the tallest thing in the woods and a prime target for lightning.

—Brad Rody, District Forester

SYMPTOM: Gnarly Trees

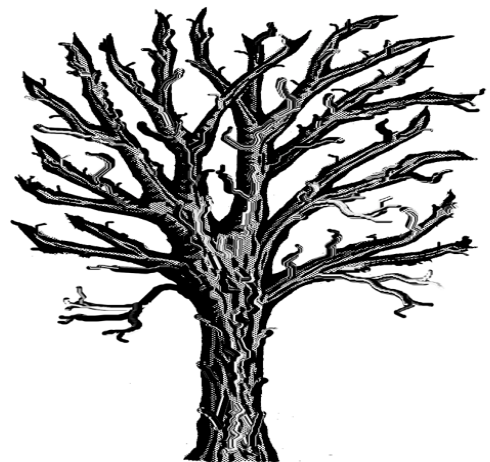
DIAGNOSIS:

I thought that I would never see
A plant as gnarly as that tree,
And what has caused it such distress
To grow into such an ugly mess?

Could it be caused by site or genes
Or dirt compacted by machines
Which dig and fill to improve the land?
It could be more than a tree could stand.

Or are they like the human race
Which accompanies aging with a wrinkled face
And twisted joints and stiffened limbs.
Would they call us “old gnarly stems?”

—Steve Brandsasse, District Forester



WARNING

We know there are more weird trees out there. We advise you to always take the following precautions:

1. Never go to the woods without a camera
2. Be sure to have plenty of film

DO NOT BE CAUGHT IN THE WOODS UNPREPARED!



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